

Acknowledged and Appreciated

Parent Teacher Committees launch initiatives to give teachers the support they need, showing them that their work is seen and valued.



At Mbogo Primary School in Rwanda's Gisagara district, teachers have three or more classes with one group of students in the morning, then another three with a second group in the afternoon. In each class, up to 60 students attend. Engaging so many students in learning is no small feat. As the day goes on, the task becomes more and more challenging for teachers.

Some teachers live too far away from the school to return home for lunch and teach the afternoon sessions without eating. Hungry and tired, they are unable to provide the same quality of instruction as in the morning session. Others walk a mile or two home and struggle to return to school to begin the afternoon session on time. Each day, the students in their afternoon sessions miss 30 minutes of valuable learning time.

Mbogo Primary School's Parent Teacher Committee (PTC) is working to ensure that teachers have what they need to be energized, alert, and ready to focus on teaching. The school now cultivates plantains and beans at the school and hired a cook so that they can provide teachers with lunch at school each day.

"It has become easier for me to resume afternoon teaching sessions on schedule. I'm able to teach with no exhaustion, as I used to experience," says teacher Gerald Ntabana.

Mbogo's PTC is one among many across the country that USAID trained on PTC roles and responsibilities as well as community support for literacy, equity in education, and teacher motivation. PTCs with the best initiatives, like Mbogo's, were awarded a grant to support their projects. Mbogo's PTC used the grant to extend the banana plantation and to buy a cow so that the teachers can have tea with milk and to fertilize the plantation.

Being unable to have lunch isn't the only challenge teachers face. Primary school teachers also receive a small salary, and many struggle financially. To help teachers cope, PTCs have also formed tontine funds. Teachers and parents contribute small amounts monthly and are able to

borrow funds from the account with a low interest rate. “Financial assistance to cover unexpected emergencies has helped us to focus on our teaching duties without worry,” says Ntabana.

At Nkaka Primary School in Nyamagabe district, parents and teachers also contribute a small fee at the beginning of each term. At the end of term, outstanding teachers are awarded the amount collected. “I feel inspired to see that the work we do here at the school is being acknowledged and I am motivated to do even better,” says teacher Twizeyimana Venantie, a representative on the PTC.

USAID trains PTCs as part of its Literacy, Language, and Learning (L3) Initiative, implemented by Education Development Center together with Concern Worldwide and VSO. By the project’s end, more than 1,000 PTCs will be trained to launch initiatives in support of teacher motivation, community support to literacy, and equity in education.